

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Udo Klein et al Art Unit : 2179
Serial No. : 10/675,919 Examiner : Noble S. Wong
Filed : September 30, 2003 Conf. No. : 2088
Title : SUCCESSIVELY DISPLAYING PANELS IN A COMPUTER USER INTERFACE

Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents

Commissioner for Patents

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BRIEF ON APPEAL

(1) Real Party in Interest

SAP Aktiengesellschaft, the assignee of this application, is the real party in interest.

(2) Related Appeals and Interferences

There are no related appeals or interferences.

(3) Status of Claims

Claims 1-18 are pending. All claims stand rejected. In particular, claims 1-5, 8, 12-16 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102, and claims 6, 7, 9-11 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

(4) Status of Amendments

The claims have not been amended subsequent to the final rejection dated January 19, 2007. A Notice of Appeal and a Pre-Appeal Request for Review were filed on March 28, 2007. A decision on the request for review issued on June 6, 2007, which maintained the rejections of all claims. A listing of the current claims is attached.

(5) Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

The claimed subject matter relates to successively displaying panels in a computer user interface. (Page 1, line 26.) Claims 1-18 are currently pending, and of those, claims 1 and 15 are independent.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a method of successively displaying panels in a computer user interface. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, line 13 to Page 8, line 2 (describing an example of how a system can successively display panels); also FIG. 6 (a flow chart of a method 600 of successively displaying panels); also Page 10, lines 3-23.) The method includes displaying a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, lines 18-29 (describing the display of exemplary user interface 200 shown in FIG. 3).) Each of the panels includes different information. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200. For example, compare FIGS. 2 and 4 showing the tab panel 218 displayed with the "Basic Pay" content 220 with FIG. 3 showing the "Personnel Data" tab panel 218; also Page 6, lines 9-29.) The computer user interface has navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200 including, for example, tab set selection tabs 212 in the tab set selection area 210; also Page 5, lines 3-24.) A first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed. (FIG. 3 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, lines 18-28 (describing user selection of the "Masterdata" tab set selection tab 212 and the resulting interface 200 shown in FIG. 3).) The method also includes receiving a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface. (Page 7, lines 5-9 (describing a link 226 to the "Basic Pay" tab panel 218); also FIG. 3 showing link 226.) There are at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 7, lines 10-21.) The method further includes ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 7, line 17 to Page 8, line 2.)

Independent claim 15 is directed to a computer program product containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to perform several enumerated functions that parallel the method steps of claim 1. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, line 13 to Page 8; also FIG. 1 (showing a block diagram of a computer system 10 capable of successively displaying panels, where the computer system 10 includes a user interface program 36 and a processor 20); also Page 10, line 29 to Page 11, line 25 (stating *inter alia* that

the invention can be implemented in digital electronic circuitry, or in computer hardware, firmware, software, or in combinations of them).)

In particular, the processor displays display a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, lines 18-29 (describing the display of exemplary user interface 200 shown in FIG. 3).) Each of the panels includes different information. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200. For example, compare FIGS. 2 and 4 showing the tab panel 218 displayed with the “Basic Pay” content 220 with FIG. 3 showing the “Personnel Data” tab panel 218; also Page 6, lines 9-29.) The computer user interface has navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information. (FIGS. 2-4 showing exemplary user interface 200 including, for example, tab set selection tabs 212 in the tab set selection area 210; also Page 5, lines 3-24.) A first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed. (FIG. 3 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 6, lines 18-28 (describing user selection of the “Masterdata” tab set selection tab 212 and the resulting interface 200 shown in FIG. 3).) The processor also receives a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface. (Page 7, lines 5-9 (describing a link 226 to the “Basic Pay” tab panel 218); also FIG. 3 showing link 226.) There are at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 7, lines 10-21.) The processor further ceases to display the first panel and display the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting. (FIGS. 3-4 showing exemplary user interface 200; also Page 7, line 17 to Page 8, line 2.)

(6) Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

Claims 1-5, 8, 12-16 and 18 stand rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,243,088 (McCormack). Claims 6 and 7 stand rejected as being unpatentable over McCormack in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,243,088 (Ulder). Claims 9, 10 and 17 stand rejected as being unpatentable over McCormack in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,341,359 (Aiken). Claim 11 stands rejected as being unpatentable over McCormack in view of Microsoft (Windows XP, Microsoft Support Article, ID #320168). All of these rejections are being appealed.

(7) Argument

(a) Claims 1-5, 8, 12-16 and 18 are not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by McCormack.

Appellant requests reversal of this rejection because McCormack, which is directed to a allowing users to attach functionality to one or more panels in a panel sequence, does not describe or suggest the subject matter of the independent claims 1 and 15, which are directed to successively displaying panels in a computer user interface. For example, McCormack does not describe or suggest “ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting,” as recited by independent claims 1 and 15.

McCormack, by contrast, discloses a common method of navigating a series of display panels through the use of next, previous, cancel and site buttons. See McCormack at col. 5, line 66 to col. 7, line 5. McCormack discloses use of next and previous buttons to enable a user to display a panel that is next in a sequence of panels (by selecting a next button) or re-display a panel that was displayed immediately previously to the panel currently being displayed and having the “previous button” that was selected, respectively. See McCormack at col. 6, lines 28-42. McCormack also discloses “tasks” that correspond to menu selections on a main screen such that selection of a task controls the sequence of panels that are presented. See McCormack at col. 5, line 65 to col. 6, line 6 (referring to FIG. 2). The same panel may be accessed in the panel sequence of different tasks. See McCormack at col. 6, lines 7-21 (referring to FIG. 2).

McCormack also discloses that “[w]hen a panel belongs to the panel sequence of more than one task, the panel that is ‘next’ may vary based on which panel sequence the user is following (i.e. which task is being performed).” See McCormack at col. 6, lines 51-54. As such, McCormack indicates that the panel sequence (or task) being executed controls the display of a subsequent panel.

McCormack further discloses that the “[s]election of the cancel button 254 causes the software application to cease displaying the current panel and to return to displaying the main screen 202 [and discarding] all of the information entered through the panels in the panel sequence.” See McCormack at col. 6, lines 55-60. As such, McCormack indicates display of the

main screen in response to selection of a cancel button. With regard to the site button, McCormack discloses that the “[s]election of the site button 256 causes user-specified functionality to be invoked.” See McCormack at col. 6, lines 61-62. McCormack indicates that a use of the site button enables customization of the panel sequence provided by the software application developer. See McCormack at col. 7, lines 2-5.

The Examiner indicates that McCormack’s next, previous and cancel buttons correspond to the claimed navigation controls. See final action at page 2, lines 16-18 and 22-23. As best understood, the Examiner seems to indicate that McCormack’s tasks correspond to the claimed settings of the navigation controls. See final action at page 2, lines 18-19 (stating “wherein a first setting (i.e. task 230 then next button 250) of the navigation controls”) and lines 22-23.

Assuming only for the sake of argument that the correspondence to the claimed elements drawn by the Examiner is correct, McCormack does not describe or suggest “ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel *using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting*,” as recited by claim 1. As required by antecedent basis of claim 1, “the at least two different settings” refers to “there being at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed.” Although McCormack discloses that the task being executed controls which panel is displayed and McCormack discloses that some or all of the navigation buttons are present on “some or all of the panels associated with tasks 230, 232 and 234,” see McCormack at col. 6, lines 24-27, McCormack does not describe or suggest ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel using one of the tasks (said to correspond to a setting of the navigation control) by which more of the navigation buttons (i.e., next, previous or cancel and said to correspond to navigation controls) remain unchanged from a different task. As such, McCormack does not describe or suggest “ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel *using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting*,” as recited by claim 1.

The final action maintained these rejections. In response to appellant’s arguments, the Examiner indicates that McCormack discloses two paths that can be traversed from the main screen to panel 210. See final action at page 10, line 12 to page 11, line 2 (indicating one path from the main screen 202 through task 230 using the next button 250 and indicating another path

from the main screen to panel 210 using task 230 or 232). The Examiner also indicates that “more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting.” See final action at page 11, lines 2-4 (citing McCormack at col. 6, lines 22-27). The cited portion of McCormack states:

In FIG. 2, for the purpose of explanation, panel 210 is shown with a next button 250, a previous button 252, a cancel button 254 and a site button 256. According to one embodiment, these or similar user interface objects are on some or all of the panels associated with tasks 230, 232 and 234.

McCormack at col. 6, lines 22-27. As such, McCormack merely discloses two paths that can be traversed from the main screen to panel 210 and that similar buttons can be on some or all of the panels. Accordingly, McCormack does not describe or suggest “ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel *using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting,*” as recited by claim 1.

For at least these reasons, appellant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent claim 1 is improper. Accordingly, appellant requests reversal of the rejection of claim 1 and its dependent claims 5, 8 and 12-14.

As noted previously, independent claim 15, though different in scope from claim 1, describes features similar to those discussed above with respect to claim 1, and does so in the context of a computer-readable medium.

Therefore, for at least the reasons described above respect to the § 102 rejection of independent claim 1, appellant respectfully submits that the rejection of independent claim 15 and its dependent claims 16 and 18 is improper and requests reversal of the rejection of the claims.

(b) Claims 6 and 7 are not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over McCormack in view of Ulder.

Appellant requests reversal of the § 103 rejection to claims 6 and 7 because any proper combination of McCormack and Ulder, which is cited as disclosing navigation controls comprising tab sets, also fails to disclose features missing from McCormack, and thus fails to support the presently pending rejection of claims 6 and 7, which each depend from independent claim 1.

Therefore, for at least these reasons and the reasons described above with respect to the § 102 rejection of independent claim 1, appellant respectfully submits that the rejection of dependent claims 6 and 7 is improper and requests reversal of the rejection of the claims.

(c) Claims 9, 10 and 17 are not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over McCormack in view of Aiken.

Appellant requests reversal of the § 103 rejection to claims 9, 10 and 17 because any proper combination of McCormack and Aiken, which is cited as disclosing diagnostics and various types of messages, also fails to disclose features missing from McCormack, and thus fails to support the presently pending rejection of claims 9, 10 and 17, which each depend from one of independent claims 1 and 15.

Therefore, for at least these reasons and the reasons described above with respect to the § 102 rejection of independent claims 1 and 15, appellant respectfully submits that the rejection of dependent claims 9, 10 and 17 is improper and requests reversal of the rejection of the claims.

(d) Claim 11 is not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over McCormack in view of Microsoft.

Appellant requests reversal of the § 103 rejection to claim 11 because any proper combination of McCormack and Microsoft, which discloses techniques by which a user can configure Microsoft Windows operating system to automatically reopen windows that were open when the user previously logged off, also fails to disclose features missing from McCormack. Microsoft, and thus fails to support the presently pending rejection of claim 11, which depends from independent claim 1.

Therefore, for at least these reasons and the reasons described above with respect to the § 102 rejection of independent claim 1, appellant respectfully submits that the rejection of dependent claim 11 is improper and requests reversal of the rejection of the claims.

Conclusion

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, appellant requests the Board to overturn the rejections of the pending claims.

A Notice of Appeal and a Pre-Appeal Brief Request for Review was filed on March 28, 2007. The time period for filing this appeal brief has been reset to one month from June 6, 2007 (which is the mailing date of the Notice of Panel Decision from Pre-Appeal Brief Review) because the two-month time period originally set based on filing the Notice of Appeal for filing the appeal brief expired on May 28, 2007, prior to the Notice of the Panel Decision.

Accordingly, the time period for filing this appeal brief extends through July 6, 2007.

The fee in the amount of \$500 in payment of the brief fee is being paid concurrently herewith on the Electronic Filing System (EFS) by way of Deposit Account authorization. Please apply any other charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 06 1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendix of Claims

1. (Original) A method of successively displaying panels in a computer user interface, the method comprising:

displaying a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface, each of the panels including different information and the computer user interface having a plurality of navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information, wherein a first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed;

receiving a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface, there being at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed; and

ceasing to display the first panel and displaying the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a hierarchy comprising nodes, and wherein the panels are located at a bottom of the hierarchy, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of paths, and wherein the one path taken to the second panel is one having a lowest common node with the first path taken to the first panel.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the first panel and the second panel are at a common level in the hierarchy.

5. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the first panel and the second panel are at different levels in the hierarchy.

6. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the navigation controls comprise tab sets each comprising a plurality of tabs, and tab set selection tabs for selecting between the tab sets, wherein a first tab is capable of triggering display of the first panel and at least a second tab and a third tab are capable of triggering display of the second panel.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein one of the second and third tabs that is part of a common tab set with the first tab is used to display the second view.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the user entered the information on the second panel before the first panel was displayed, and wherein displaying the second panel provides the user access to the entered information.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein an analysis of the information entered on the second panel prompted dispatch of a message relating to the entered information, the message containing a link to the second panel, wherein activating the link triggers a determination of which of the at least two settings of the navigation controls to use for displaying the second panel.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the message is one selected from the group consisting of: an error message, a warning message, an informational message, a confirmation message, and combinations thereof.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein an application program was closed after the information was entered, and wherein the application program includes the first and second panels and is opened before receiving the request to display the second panel, wherein displaying the second panel allows the user access to the information that was entered before the application program was closed.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a system of nodes that does not form a tree, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of nodes, and wherein the one of the at least two paths to the second panel is used that has a common node with the first path to the first panel that is nearest the first panel.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein identifying the common node involves beginning with those of the nodes that are nearest the second panel in the system of nodes, and determining whether any of these nodes are common with any node in the first path.

15. (Original) A computer program product containing executable instructions that when executed cause a processor to:

display a first panel of a plurality of panels in a computer user interface, each of the panels including different information and the computer user interface having a plurality of navigation controls by which a user can navigate to any one of the panels to access its information, wherein a first setting of the navigation controls causes the first panel to be displayed;

receive a user input requesting access to information on a second panel in the computer user interface, there being at least two different settings of the navigation controls that will cause the second panel to be displayed; and

cease to display the first panel and display the second panel using one of the at least two different settings by which more of the navigation controls remain unchanged from the first setting.

16. (Original) The computer program product of claim 15, wherein the plurality of panels is arranged in a hierarchy comprising nodes, and wherein the panels are located at a bottom of the hierarchy, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes wherein the first setting of the navigation controls correspond to a first path in the hierarchy of nodes and wherein the at least two settings of the navigation controls for causing display of the second panel correspond to respective at least two paths in the hierarchy of paths, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

display the second panel using the one of the at least two paths that has a lowest common node with the first path taken to the first panel.

17. (Original) The computer program product of claim 15, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

dispatch a message relating to information entered by the user on the second panel, the message containing a link to the second panel that when activated triggers a determination of which of the at least two settings of the navigation controls to use for displaying the second panel.

18. (Original) The computer program product of claim 15, wherein the panels are arranged in a system of nodes that does not form a tree, and wherein the navigation controls allow the user to navigate by taking different paths in the hierarchy of nodes, further comprising instructions that when executed cause the processor to:

begin with nodes nearest the second panel and determine whether any of these nodes are common with any node in a path by which the first panel was reached.

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Evidence Appendix

None.

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Related Proceedings Appendix

None.